

How to Share Your Testimony - Part 6 - Acts 22:17-22 – October 18th, 2009

- This is part six of a series titled; "How to Share Your Testimony." We're studying how Paul tells this mob how he came to Christ.
- There are a number of methods Paul employs in his testimony, and we'll quickly look at them by way of both review and introduction.

1. Be prepared (Verse 1)

- The way Paul begins seems to indicate that he had not only anticipated this opportunity, but had actually been well prepared for it.

2. Speak their language (Verse 2)

- Paul could have spoken Greek but chooses to speak in the Hebrew tongue, knowing they would understand the language of their heart.

3. Find common ground (Verse 3a)

- Paul says he's a Jew born in Tarsus but brought up in Jerusalem so he would have common ground with the Greek and Hellenist Jews.

4. Earn their respect (Verses 3b-5)

- Paul allies himself to both Jewish factions when he tells them he was trained by Gamaliel the most respected Jewish Rabbi of their day.

5. Turn on the light (Verses 6-9)

- Instead of the curse of the law and what it couldn't do for them, he tells them about the light of the world and what He could do for them.

6. Keep it simple (Verses 10-11)

- When he asks Jesus what he's to do, he's just told to "simply" go to Damascus, then, he's led, like a child, by the hand and by faith.

7. Include the miraculous (Verses 12-13)

- After being blinded by the light, Paul tells how he received his sight when God, through Ananias, miraculously removed his blindness.

8. Highlight God's forgiveness (Verses 14-16)

- Paul tells how Ananias asks what he's waiting for and says get up be baptized and have your sins washed away by calling on the Lord.

9. Emphasize God's Word (Verses 17-18)

17 "When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance 18 and saw the Lord speaking. 'Quick!' he said to me. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.'

- v17 Paul goes on to tell them that when he returned to Jerusalem from Damascus and was praying at the temple, he fell into a trance.
- v18 He sees and hears the Lord telling him to leave Jerusalem immediately, because his testimony about Jesus won't be accepted.
- Paul is emphasizing the Word of the Lord directing and protecting him, and not his spiritual experience that would've made it about him.

One commentator said it this way; "Paul had an impressive vision of Jesus while in the temple; yet he never referred to this vision in his letters, and seems to only mention it now out of necessity. Paul's Christian life was founded on God's truth, not spiritual experiences, and he didn't even like to talk a lot about his spiritual experiences."

10. Communicate God's love (Verses 19-21)

19 "'Lord,' I replied, 'these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. 20 And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' 21 "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

- v19 Paul tries to tell them, by referring to his past persecution of Christians, that he had some convincing reasons for accepting Christ.
- v20-21 He then introduces them to God's call on his life to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, even though his heart was for the Jews.
- The problem with this, as we'll see in the next verse, is that this would have been unthinkable. The Jews absolutely hated the Gentiles.

"Their national prejudice was aroused; they could not endure that the Gentiles should be spoken of as regarded by God. ... The infuriated mob raved like madmen when Paul had spoken of the Lord's grace towards the Gentiles. ... May the Lord save us from all bitterness and bigotry of spirit."

Charles Spurgeon

- What is the Apostle Paul doing here? Make no mistake about it; he knows that the mere mention of the word "Gentile," will anger them.
- He is communicating God's love for both Jews and Gentiles. Paul knows that you can't share your faith without sharing the love of God.

11. Expect some opposition (Verses 22)

22 The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"

- v22 The crowd had listened up to the point that he mentioned the Gentiles, then they shout; "rid the earth of him, he's not fit to live!"
- I suppose you could say that this wasn't very well received. Let me take it a step further; "Paul has utterly and miserably failed here."
- Rather than being met with success he's met with vitriolic opposition and thus he fails in his attempt to win his Jewish brothers to Jesus.

"No man is worthy to succeed until he is willing to fail. ... Immediate 'results' are all that matter, quick proofs of present success without a thought of next week or next year. Religious pragmatism is running wild among the orthodox. Truth is whatever works. If it gets results it is good. There is but one test for the religious leader: success. Everything is forgiven him except failure."

A.W. Tozer